

WOLF BLITZER: So, will more time help the U.S. Military? Can the war in Iraq still be won? Joining us now is Indiana Republican Congressman Mike Pence. He's a recent visitor to Iraq. Congressman, thanks for coming in. You issued a statement saying this war is not lost. That's less than robust. You're not saying the U.S. is winning, are you?

REP. MIKE PENCE: Well, it, look, this has been a very tough time in Iraq, as we saw last month, when we were on the ground, and in the week since then. As the surge has moved into the streets of Baghdad, in particular, in Ramadi, the enemy is fighting back. We've seen the horrific bombings. But it doesn't change the fact that there is modest success on the ground. I think General Petraeus will tell the Congress what we heard in Baghdad, and that is that sectarian violence is down. That U.S. and Iraqi forces are forward-deployed now at dozens of joint security stations throughout Baghdad, and throughout Ramadi, and there's real evidence that Sunnis are stepping forward to support the government and support U.S. forces.

BLITZER: Here is what looks like is happening. Correct me if I'm wrong. The U.S. sends in Marines, beefed-up forces into the Al Anbar Province to deal with the Al Qaeda threat there, the insurgency there. They move through the Diyala Province and in that province we saw that attack against the 82nd Airborne yesterday, killing all of those soldiers, yesterday, wounding a lot more. A lot of people are wondering, why doesn't the Iraqi army, which has hundreds of thousands, supposedly, the Iraqi police, why can't they take the lead and get the job done? It's their country. It's not ours.

REP. PENCE: That's a fair question. And frankly, Wolf, one of the concerns that we heard from General Petraeus was that, as we move the surge into those two major cities, and seek to implement the President's plan to quell violence, particularly in Baghdad and in the Al Anbar province, you would see the Al Qaeda elements move in to the outlying areas. That's why this is about a political solution. The president, as you just heard again on your air, the president has a goal here, a strategy here that would make Baghdad safe enough for the political process, and a long-term political settlement to be achieved. But look, there's no question that these recent bombings have been disappointing. Baghdad is not safe, but because of the deployment of U.S. and Iraqi forces throughout the capital, Baghdad is safer.

BLITZER: I want you to have a chance to clarify. You got a lot of criticism for the comments you made when you were there, on April 1st. I'm going to play you a clip of what you said. Explain to the viewers, what you meant, and if you want to revise that comment. Listen to this.

REP. PENCE [FILE]: I was not prepared for, to find a marketplace where thousands and thousands of Iraqis were moving about, in regular everyday life, like a normal outdoor market in Indiana in the summertime.

BLITZER: All right, Congressman. You know you've been criticized for suggesting the marketplace that you and Senator McCain walked around was sort of like walking around a country fair in Indiana.

REP. PENCE: Poor choice of words. And what I was describing there, attempting however imperfectly to describe, rather, Wolf, was that this was two or three city blocks, open air,

hundreds of tents, thousands of people milling around through hundreds of merchants. We flew over several marketplaces that General Petraeus, U.S. and Iraqi forces had hardened, and you began to see people coming back. No question about it, the comparison to Indiana was confusing for many people, and I regret that that confusion and some controversy took attention away from the real evidence of progress that we found on the ground in Baghdad. Once again, sectarian violence is down, U.S. and Iraqi forces are deployed throughout the city of Baghdad, and with the Sunnis stepping forward in what's called the Iraqi Awakening Movement, I think there's real evidence, if we can keep Congress out of micromanaging this war and setting artificial timelines, I think we have a real opportunity for the President's plan and for freedom to win in Iraq.

BLITZER: As we are speaking, Congressman, your Democratic colleague Dennis Kucinich is announcing he is going to introduce articles of impeachment against the Vice President. Listen to this clip.

REP. DENNIS KUCINICH [FILE]: I believe the Vice President's conduct of office has been destructive to the founding purls of our nation. Today, I have introduced House Resolution 333, articles of impeachment relating to Vice President Richard B. Cheney.

BLITZER: We are going to be speaking with Congressman Kucinich later this hour. What do you say to him?

REP. PENCE: If it be timetables for withdraw of Iraq that are beyond the purview of the Constitution's role of the Congress in a time of war, or if it's the Congressman's effort -- I think you are going to see this Democrat majority use every legislative means at their disposal to attack this presidency, and attack a policy overseas. I know Congressman Kucinich well; he is a consistent opponent of the effort in Iraq. But this isn't the appropriate way to have a national debate.

BLITZER: Congressman, thank you for coming in.

REP. PENCE: Thank you, Wolf.

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